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*Brief*

# EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE 80's

presentation of

the N.B. ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

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The following brief to the Warren Allmand Special Committee on Employment Opportunities for the 80's is presented by the New Brunswick Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Reflecting the concerns of the women of N.B., we are addressing the committee specifically on how we see N.B. women in relation to the discussions of Employment Opportunities for the 80's.

Your committee has outlined three sorts of goals. We wish to express our views on each of those topics and shall take them in order. Thus, we address first the issue of where and what kinds of jobs will exist in the next ten years. Next we move to our concerns relating to the expected demography of that work force, and finally we will suggest possible solutions, that is, of making sure that those who are looking for work are properly trained for the available jobs.

#### JOBS OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Following the progress of your hearings, it is the obvious that many employers feel that Canada will be experiencing a critical shortage of specialized skilled labor over the next decade. This assessment is further supplemented by the recent Economic Council of Canada report, Skills and Shortages. That analysis underlines the skilled labor shortage problem and breaks it down into regions. Thus, in Atlantic Canada, as in the rest of Canada, industries have been experiencing and expect to continue to experience, shortages in the product fabrication and repair, clerical, and sciences and engineering sectors. Particular to this region, however, is past and expected difficulty in finding workers for the service sector. (This will be discussed in depth in the 3rd section). Finally, from a recent Employment and Immigration report called F O I L, (Forward Occupational Imbalance Listing #3, 1979)





we are aware that presently New Brunswick is experiencing extreme manpower surpluses in several occupations - including some service occupations, but, no extreme, only moderate requirements for manpower (see Table 1 and Table 2 (c)). Thus, when we talk about jobs available over the next decade in N. B., we know it can be useful to prepare our workers for all aforementioned jobs that anticipate shortages. We are also very aware that, barring any major new industrial investments in this area, we are still talking about moderate manpower needs. Due to this reality, our report will be addressing the types of long term changes needed in the labor market to better accommodate the women of N.B. wishing to work.

Regarding women's present participation in the labor market, over three quarters (77.2%)\* of working women employed in Canada can be classified in only five major occupational groups. (As compared to thirteen for men.) These are the clerical, sales, service, nursing and teaching occupations. At the same time, all five occupations have a few characteristics in common: they are low paid, low status and offer little room for career advancement. They are labelled "female ghetto jobs".

At present in New Brunswick these five groupings account for 78.3% of the female unemployment. (see Tables a,b,c) Specifically, for the clerical and sales occupations, which presently account for 51.9% of the Canadian female work force, the situation is expected to get worse. A recent opposition party report published in Great Britain, cites the approach of micro-electronics to the clerical and retail sectors as a major threat to thousands of traditionally female jobs. In its conclusions, the report recommended that British women themselves must show "the ability and willingness to move away from the traditional areas of employment and equip themselves in the skills and conditions of the jobs in the future" <sup>1</sup>

\* Source: Women in the Labor Force 1978-79, Labor Canada





We agree that women must somehow move away from these traditional women's jobs - or female ghetto jobs. We agree that the job market is becoming more specialized and technical and that women must become trained alongside men in the skills required for the future. We do not agree, however, with the British Report's assessment that the problem can be solved merely by women themselves showing willingness to move away from the job ghetto and become trained. If that were the only problem, we would no longer have a female job ghetto. No, equality in the work force will only result from attitude change in society. The best way to cause such a change in attitude will be to achieve it first through the major institutions which perpetuate the original attitude. Thus in our recommendations, we suggest changes in the schools, trade schools and college, and finally manpower training programs.

In short, we accept the validity of employers' reports of expected skilled labor shortages. We are also aware of accelerating technological advance that will forever change the working place, beginning now in the 80's . For all workers, more specialized skills will be needed in order to compete in this labor market. Of concern to women is the fact that many old skills will be rendered redundant. All potential workers must be prepared to meet these challenges, and society must be equipped to provide the necessary training. Before discussing such training though, we turn to an analysis of just who will be working, thus of whom we must retrain.

#### THE FEMALE LABOR FORCE MOVES INTO THE 80's

If one examines the labor force figures only as they relate to women, the exposé becomes an eye opener. Thus, although the participation of men in the labor force has remained constant over the past ten years, it has jumped 61.9% for women! This is impressive, to say the least, and perhaps can be said to reflect women's growing self assertiveness. However, in real figures, it






means that continuously over the past 10 years, 78% of men who were 15 years of age and over were working or actively looking for work. This is called a 78% participation rate. For women the "jump" was from a 36% participation rate in 1969 to 48.9% in 1979. The major increase came from married women aged 35-44 years\*. This does indeed reflect a major social change: married women returning to the labor market after the children have reached school age. On the other hand, when one considers that most of these women are presently wallowing in the aforementioned job ghetto, that 8.8% of women as compared to 6.6% of men are unemployed, one comes to understand that this social change did not necessarily mean a change towards equality with men in the job market.

All women are being shortchanged in original career counseling and job training programs. Most women are being funnelled into the dead end job ghetto. These conscientious mothers who inundated the job market in the seventies, following their séjour at home with preschool and schoolaged children were doubly cheated. They found themselves penalized for their "holiday from work" as they were told their skills, abilities and training were outdated. For them, returning to work meant stepping down a few rungs on the ladder - into even lower skilled and lower paying jobs than they'd held previously. No upgrading courses awaited them, only lowpaying, and for many, part time employment (23.2% of women as compared to 8.6% of men work part time in Canada\*).

From our own research we have come to the conclusion that society is on the brink of another social change involving women and work. More and more women are learning to assert themselves to take training for non traditional jobs in suing employers for equal pay under the Human Rights Act, and in speaking up about sexual harassment on the job. These spokeswomen are the pioneers,

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\* Sources: Women and the Labor Force, 1978-79, Labor Canada



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are very few in number, but their courage and the publicity it receives, gives other women reassurance in asserting their own selves. These are the symptoms of the beginning of the change. The change we are speaking of is the major push towards equality in the work market, sparked by a major change in attitude towards women working. We are going to see higher and higher female participation rates, not because of assertiveness, but because of need. Women in particular and society at large will more and more need the productivity of women to keep our economy viable. We refer to two very imminent social factors which will perpetuate this change: the aging of our population and inflation.

The first brings us to a consideration of the cost to our economy of the workers supporting the non workers. According to demographic evidence reported in the recent Senate report, Retirement Without Tears <sup>2</sup>, our population is aging at an accelerating rate. In 1986, it is expected that Canada will have 2.6 million citizens aged 65 years and over. Whereas by 2031, at which time all children of the postwar baby boom will be in retirement, the number is reportedly expected to swell over 6 million.

The senate report counts the children and the retirees of our society as the two major dependent groups, and states that the falling off birth rate will partly compensate for the burden of the accelerating retirement rates. They then conclude that the recent increase in female labor force participation will swell the number of workers, and thus ease the burden of the cost to workers paying for non-workers. The report however, did not consider recent evidence that it costs society approximately three times the amount to support a senior citizen as it costs to support a child.<sup>3</sup> Thus, we are going to need many more workers in the very near future, in order to support the economy for the swelling costs of non-producing consumers. Society will be needing





to employ as many as possible of its working age population: it will need its women to work.

The second factor expected to push women into the labor market is inflation. Simplistically speaking in Malthusian terms: the population is growing, causing an increasing number of people to compete for a limited amount of goods. Thus, as competition for even basic goods increases (food, shelter, heat), costs are going to rise. Families of tomorrow will need both spouses to work in order to enjoy the same standard of living enjoyed in the traditional father working, mother at home family of a decade ago. Underlining this point, we refer to the estimation reported in the recent National Council of Welfare report, Woman and Poverty <sup>4</sup>, that at present in Canada, we would have 50% more families living in poverty if the wives of these families were not working. Thus, on an individual basis, more and more women will be working out of financial need. The caricature of the little woman working to amuse herself by earning some pin money is fast fading into an enigma of the past. Women of all ages will need to work, and society too will need their contributions.

Thus, to answer your committee's questions on the demographic makeup of workers in the 80's we offer in Tables 3 and 4 on present female participation with labor force, by age, and by marital status. We feel justified in believing, on the basis of the discussions presented here, that the next decade will see another 10 point jump in women's labor force participation rates. This will imply a 60% participation rate: meaning that, for the first time in Canadian history, the majority of working age women in Canada will be involved in the labor force. The social change predicted will have come about.





## WHO DO WE TRAIN AND HOW?

Our goal is to see a labor market in which women and men can compete on an equal footing for available jobs. As already discussed, it is apparent that skilled jobs are opening up and that we need trained people to fill them. Secondly, we have talked about attitude changes needed in the training and counselling institutions necessary to move women out of the job ghetto. Finally, we are aware of some abnormalities in supply and demand work requirements, such that, although Atlantic Canada requires clerical and service workers, there are many such workers registering as unemployed. Either these people do not have relevant training, or working conditions for them must improve. The following recommendations follow from these three points, with as we have said, emphasis being placed on long term goals.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### a) TRAINING

We concur with the Ontario Status of Women in recommending the following:

- setting, monitoring and enforcing annual targets for women's participation in skilled trade apprenticeship and training programs.
- establishing pre-apprenticeship training programs especially designed to recruit and prepare women for skilled training opportunities.
- encouragement to the private sector to expand on the job training programs which include quotas for female participation.





- encouragement to the private sector to take responsibility for training in order to provide the skilled labor required for the 80's.
- increased financial and other resource support for the existing federal program: Introduction to Non Traditional Occupations.

b) COUNSELING

Again, we agree with the Ontario Status of Women in making the following recommendations:

- providing information in all vocational training programs on the changing role of women in society, their legislated rights, their participation in the work force etc.
- mandatory awareness training for guidance counsellors and teachers at the public school and high school levels.
- a major review of the entrance requirements and procedures to skilled trades training programs and jobs to determine their effect on women's access to skilled trades.
- an increased commitment to the awareness/education program to publicize and improve the image of women in non traditional jobs.
- mandatory awareness training for a) apprenticeship counselors; and b) manpower training staff who interact directly with the public.
- a well publicized informational and counselling service for women wanting information on non traditional job opportunities and training programs. This service should also assist with the problems faced by the first wave of women.



c) FEMALE GHETTO JOBS - Labour Shortages

One major reason labour shortages are listed for clerical and service occupations (and now nursing in N.B.) is the low pay and generally unattractive working conditions of these occupations. We thus recommend the following as a precedent setting:

- a contract compliance clause, where possible, to encourage employees having business with the federal government who have such personnel to provide salaries and working conditions comparable to those provided by the public service.

A second reason may be the outdated training provided clerical workers and lack of adequate training for service personnel. Thus, we recommend the following:

- where numbers of trainees warrant, a major review of training programs for high turnover occupations, with a view of making the training more relevant to the job situations.





TABLE # 1

LABOUR SURPLUSES AND REQUIREMENTS, N.B., 1979\*

LABOUR SURPLUS - EXTREME

General Office clerks  
Sales clerks, commodities  
Guards, related security operations  
Excavating, grading  
Carpenters and related  
Laboring and other elemental work  
Light truck driver

LABOUR REQUIREMENT - EXTREME

None

LABOUR REQUIREMENT - MODERATE

Management occupations, construction  
Pharmacists  
Insurance sales, agents  
Logging Tractor operator  
Motor Vehicle Mechanic  
Millwright  
Engine fitter

\* Source: Forward Occupational Imbalance Listing,  
Employment and Immigration Canada, Oct. 1979





TABLE # 2 (a) FEMALE UNEMPLOYMENT IN N.B., FEB. 1980

|                               | %       |  |
|-------------------------------|---------|--|
| Social Sciences and related   | 1.1%    |  |
| Teaching and related          | 3.1% *  | * The five<br>female ghetto<br>classifications |
| Medicine and Health           | 4.1% *  |  |
| Clerical and related          | 34.9% * |  |
| Sales                         | 11.2% * |  |
| Service                       | 25.0% * |  |
| Farming, horticulture         | 1.6%    |  |
| Processing                    | 9.8%    |  |
| Product fabrication, Repair   | 2.5%    |  |
| Material Handling and related | 1.7%    |  |

\* Source: Employment and Immigration, N.B. Feb. 1980

TABLE # 2 (b) MAJOR FEMALE OCCUPATIONS IN CANADA \* (The female ghetto)

|                      | % Female Labor Force |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Clerical             | 34.0%                |
| Service              | 17.9%                |
| Sales                | 10.7%                |
| Medecine and Health  | 8.7%                 |
| Teaching and related | 6.1%                 |

\* Source: Women in the Labor Force 1978-79, Labor Canada



TABLE # 2 (c)      DEMAND FOR MAJOR FEMALE OCCUPATIONS IN N.B.  
( Labour    Surpluses or Demands as per FOIL)

| <u>Classification</u>        | <u>Specific Jobs</u>   | <u>Status</u>                                   |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| <u>Clerical</u>              | Secretaries, stenographers, clerk typists<br>clerks (assorted) | Moderate manpower surplus                       |
| <u>Service</u>               | Food and beverage serving, cleaners, janitors, domestic maids  | Moderate manpower surplus                       |
| <u>Sales</u>                 | Sales workers  | Moderate to extreme manpower surplus            |
| <u>Medicine &amp; Health</u> | Nursing supervisors<br>graduate nurses<br>nursing assistants   | Light need<br>Light surplus<br>Moderate surplus |
| <u>Teaching and Related</u>  | Elementary and secondary school teachers                       | Moderate surplus                                |

\* Source: Forward Occupational Imbalance Listing,  
Employment and Immigration Canada, Oct. 1979





TABLE # 3

PARTICIPATION RATES OF WOMEN PER AGE GROUP, 1969, 1979 \*

| AGE        | 1969  | 1979  | % increase<br>over 10 years |
|------------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|
| 15-24 yrs. | 47.1% | 61.0% | 14.0%                       |
| 25-34 yrs. | 38.2% | 60.4% | 12.2%                       |
| 35-44 yrs. | 38.8% | 59.4% | 20.6%                       |
| 45-54 yrs  | 39.3% | 52.1% | 12.8%                       |
| 55-64 yrs. | 30.3% | 34.0% | 9.7%                        |
| All women  | 36.0% | 40.9% | 12.9%                       |

\* Source: Women in the Labor Force 1978-79, Labor Canada,  
Table 23.





TABLE # 4

FEMALE POPULATION AND FEMALE LABOR FORCE  
by Marital Status and Participation Rates, 1969, 1979\*

| <u>a) 1969</u>                 | Population<br>(in 000's) | Labor Force<br>(in 000's) | Participation Rate<br>(%) |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Single                         | 1690                     | 907                       | 53.7                      |
| Married                        | 4657                     | 1450                      | 31.1                      |
| Widowed, Divorced<br>Separated | 833                      | 225                       | 27.0                      |
| Total                          | 7179                     | 2581                      | 36.0                      |

| <u>b) 1979</u>                 | Population<br>(in 000's) | Labor Force<br>(in 000's) | Participation Rate<br>(%) |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Single                         | 2137                     | 1321                      | 61.8                      |
| Married                        | 5577                     | 2643                      | 47.4                      |
| Widowed, Divorced<br>Separated | 1301                     | 444                       | 34.1                      |
| Total                          | 9016                     | 4408                      | 48.9                      |

\* Source: Women in the Labor Force, 1978-79, Labor Canada  
Table 24 (b)



FOOTNOTES

1. "Micro Chip Threatening Working Women" an article in St. John Telegraph Journal, 25 Sept. 1980
2. Senate of Canada, Retirement Without Tears, 1979
3. Rix, Sara, "Rethinking Retirement Age Policies in the U.S. and Canada", Personnel Journal, Vol 58 (11) 1979 pp 780-788.
4. National Council of Welfare Report: Women and Poverty, October 1979.



